



Profiles in Wellness



Amy L. Ai, PhD

Michigan

At high school, I was very athletic and ran all the time. During my doctoral program at the University of Michigan (UM), I began my research on complementary and alternative medicine and cardiovascular diseases and learned an energy exercise, Taoist longevity Qigong, from a "third-generation" Chen-Style, elderly Taiwanese Tai Chi Master.

Busy academic life since 1996, however, swallowed all my time, including that for exercise. While struggling between my two positions in both health systems, University of Washington (UW) and UM, I got five sequential ankle injuries on both sides; especially, a job-related one put me on-and-off crutches over three years and I lost my capacity for running. Ankle pain woke me up every night at 2-3 a.m., my muscles shrank considerably, and my life became miserable. The sixth ankle injury at a national convention became a wake-up call.

To prevent permanent disability, I restored my daily exercises one month afterward. I rode a bike and performed Qigong daily with a heavy cast boot and swam with a light cast boot. In a few months, I got the quickest recovery among all six incidents. Today, I sleep well, keep my muscles in shape, and have regained my capacity of running.